

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK**

December 8, 2011

5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

Present: Mayor Donald Kasprzak, Councilors Tim Carpenter (W1), Mark Tiffer (W2), George Rabideau (W3), Jim Calnon (W4), Chris Case (W5), Chris Jackson (W6)

Absent: None

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the regular meeting of the Common Council held on December 1, 2011 are approved and placed on file among the public records of the City Clerk's Office.

By Councilor Rabideau; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter
Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)

2. PAYROLLS OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS:

RESOLVED: That the payrolls of the various Departments of the City of Plattsburgh for the week ending December 7, 2011 in the amount of \$ 345,253.17 are authorized and allowed and the Mayor and the City Clerk are hereby empowered and directed to sign warrants drawn on the City Chamberlain for the payment thereof.

By Councilor Case; Seconded by Councilor Jackson
Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)

3. REPORTS OF CITY OFFICES & COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Report of Fire and Ambulance Responses for the week of December 1 – December 7, 2011
- Report from the Building Inspector's Office from November 23 – December 2, 2011

RESOLVED: That the reports as read are hereby ordered, received and placed on file among the public records of the City Clerk's Office.

By Councilor Case; Seconded by Councilor Carpenter
Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)

4. CORRESPONDENCE & RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARDS: None

5. **AUDIT OF CLAIMS:**

RESOLVED: That the bills Audited by the Common Council in the amount of \$ 3,874,758.28 are authorized and allowed and the Mayor and City Clerk (where required) are hereby authorized and directed to sign warrants drawn on the City Chamberlain for the payment thereof.

By Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Tiffer

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

6. **PERSONS ADDRESSING COUNCIL:**

Mayor Kasprzak said at this time every week we invite individuals to come to our podium and give us your name and your address and you let us know how you feel about whatever topic you are here for. I can obviously recognize and see that this will be a Library discussion this evening. I would like to point out a few things before we start the public process: 1. I would like it very clear to everyone that this body here the Mayor and the Council are responsible for providing funding only for the Library. We do not make any decisions on personnel, we do not make any decisions on Union contracts, we do not make any decisions on hours, scheduling, all those things. I just want everybody in this room to be clear on that. If you have any issues with those types of things, which obviously many of you do because you're here this evening, the people who are responsible for that, the Board of Trustees at the Library, are holding a meeting next Tuesday at the Library at 4:30 pm. Now we will be glad to listen to your comments. Our rules are very simple we have a 5 minute time limit for people to speak to us. We expect, as I'm sure everyone will be, will be respectful and professional. We've had people in the past, and I don't mind getting attacked because I usually am, personally attack people and we will not allow that. And we don't debate people here. This is not a question and answer type of public comment period. We will be glad to listen to your comments and they will be recorded. With that being said, I invite the first speaker to approach the podium and give us your name and your address.

William Turcotte 92 Bridge Street said we attended the meeting on Monday and it was pretty much the same there. We weren't allowed any answers to the questions that were asked or anything like that. Just saying pretty much what I said on Monday. My wife and I have been using the Library since 1997 when we first moved here to Plattsburgh. My daughter has been going to the Library her entire 10 years of life. Most of the senior staff has known her since infancy. We rely on the Library for different things. There's obviously 3 people 3 different taste in books. We don't really have a book store anymore. So we go through our Library. We don't have internet at home so I use the computers, my daughter does. My daughter looks forward every year to things like the summer reading program. Plattsburgh does not have a lot of things for our children, especially, things that are free for our children to be involved in. Attacking such a vital pillar of our community is just disgusting to me. And I think that there out to be another way around this.

Kate Gardner 169 Broad Street said I am a resident and taxpayer in the City of Plattsburgh. I won't repeat what I said at the meeting Monday night, Mr. Carpenter has heard it. But, I will say what I didn't say at that time is that this is a mess. It's a fiduciary mess; it's a budget fund mess. I say

this as the former Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Chester Library in Warren County. It was part of our job to know how to read a budget. If we weren't able to read the budget we had a treasurer there who helped us walk through the steps because it's a complicated process as you all know. I see from where I sit what I would have said as a trustee at that time is that there was misappropriation of funds. What to do about that, come to the city ask for maybe a loan, ask for maybe that tax cap wiggle room that was mentioned in the newspaper. Maybe bring other players to the table like the Friends of the Library who do have a fund balance, maybe offer that as a loan. Maybe different partners coming to the table and talking about how can we all work with \$150,000 short fall that's there. I would also ask as a Trustee at that time, and I will mention this at the Board Meeting, but I would ask for the immediate resignation of the Director because it is a mess that he was involved with. The Board is fiduciary agents even though they are separate entity and separately independent. I might be called a big mouth for coming in at the last stage of the game and saying where were you then. I did approach my Ward Councilor as did my husband who is a professional librarian and we spoke with Mr. Rabideau who is a neighbor and a friend and we were told that there is a silly rule, which you don't all have responsibility for, which is that there can only be one rep from each Ward on the Board. So our hands were tied in getting involved when we saw issues several years ago.

Amy Bonn 23 Stetson Ave said I have been a resident here for 6 years. I think we've all probably partake in the great assets our Library has to offer. And I feel like what we've got now is the middle chapter of the books. Ok we know it's a mess, we know who's out there, but we don't have the whole story. There's been no transparency about this process. We're left with lingering questions of how did we get to this mess? What roles and responsibilities do people have? Where are the checks and balances? So there's no front end of this story and the public certainly deserves that. And what we really need to do is we need to figure out what are those last 3 chapters are going to look like. Ok, how do we as citizens make sure that this doesn't happen? How do we make sure that the citizens and the employees are not treated as horrifically as they've been treated and that should be one of our primary responsibilities here? And how do we make sure it doesn't happen again? What can we put down, what kind of plan of action, what are those chapters going to be crafted like? And that is the role that all of you play right here. You guys do help write those last chapters and you can help work with the residents. And clearly you have a lot of support here right now to make things happen. And I would implore you to work very hard for your fellow citizens who have been treated very shabbily as Library employees to try and figure out a positive constructive solution there. And lets work together to find a really good way to move forward with how we are going to keep one of our treasures in Plattsburgh.

Stuart Voss 38 Hillcrest Ave said I am going to share my prospective which is really your prospective. On the Council for 4 years, I was the liaison to the Library Board so I know exactly where you've been and what's been happening. That was a time in the early part of the last decade where the Library was completely renovated, its services were expanded. The hope was that when that was done that with a remodeled Library and new services that the public in the city would respond to that. I think its clear evidence since 2004 that the public has responded. And that Library is used by many many people, our family particularly my wife. But the important thing is there are many people in the city who do not have the opportunity, financially, to be able to in a sense have their own Library services including computers, including books, recreational opportunities as that

parent indicated for children. It's the same with recreation. When the Charter was revised those of on the Charter commission one of the reasons we put in the Charter revision that along with sewer, and water, and fire, and police that recreation and library services were not a luxury, that they were essential services for all of the citizens of this city. And their mandated as you know and has been brought up in the paper. Here I think you need to weigh the short term situation your in with the long term consequences of what could happen. You have a resource the city has invested considerable resources in that building and in those services and in that personnel to expand to serve the city a great many of our citizens who use it. To undertake the cutting of 1/3 of the staff in one year seems to me a rather fool hearty approach because it's hard restore. If money comes in the next couple of years, you can't just get that back all of sudden. You're really having to change the nature of the services. I think you need to think about that. When you have a resource and you've committed that much input in to that resource. You don't take it down all of sudden to respond to a one year situation. You try and figure out over a 4 or 5 year period how you can meet necessities of the immediate moment but still preserve the opportunity to restore that service to what it had been. So what I would urge you to do is to look ahead over the next 3 or 4 years. See if there are any retirements coming up. Ask the Library Board, it's not your responsibility, if there are any retirements that are coming up. So perhaps you can cut maybe 1 or 2 positions if necessary so that you don't take a staff that's 18 down to 12. That's going to impact services tremendously. You have the .14, I figured out in my case it means an extra \$7 or \$8. I know how valuable that service is to our family and I think many of the citizens around this city, particularly those who don't have the money to finance their own library services and their own recreation services could certainly be willing to find that amount of money to maintain the kind of services they had. So what I am urging you to do because you handle the financial side is to work with the Library Board to see if you can come up with a way in which you don't have such severe personnel cuts in one year and destroy something that's very hard to get back in the future. And think about how over the next 4 or 5 years you can deal with this problem in 1 or 2 years and maybe work back to where you were. But don't take such a drastic cut in one year that you are going to pay for really quite a while in terms of what you are losing. In terms of the investment you've already made in that service. You can do it creatively. I know I've been sitting where you sat. I've been on 5 year planning processes I know how this works it can be done. I just think you have to put the time in to it working with the Library Board to make sure it gets done.

Sandy Soulia 18 Marcy Lane said I'm a long time resident. I'm a reader. I've been using this Library for 40 some years. I've read our Library books to my children, to my grandchildren and now that I have time to indulge my love of reading I figure the Library saves me \$50 to \$75 a week. Others come to the Library to use computers, read newspapers and magazines, use resource materials, check out books on tape, videos, cd's. Even to use the public phone. It's a busy place as you would know if you are a Library person. I'm disappointed with the powers that be have decided that they only way to balance a budget is to cut employees. We listen to TV, we read the newspaper and that's what corporations do to balance budgets. We're a small city and a small Library. Surely there is another way to make ends meet. Cutting a staff that is already small can only lead us down a slippery slope. I appeal to you; be positive, be creative, brainstorm, look at the community of library patrons, find additional means to fund our library it's important to the residents of Plattsburgh and the surrounding area.

Elizabeth Baker 40 Grace Ave said I was reading about the history of the Library this afternoon. It was started by a minister in the Baptist church and he discovered that the state of New York was sending around books to different cities in the state. So he asked the state to send 50 books to Plattsburgh. Plattsburgh started to get 50 books they went out then 50 books would go back to the central Library 50 more books would come. And this was happening at the end of 2 centuries ago, 1894. I can't remember the exact date. One of the things that struck me was when I went to the meeting on, I can't remember what night it was now, was that we could risk losing our accreditation as a Library. That's something this city fought for and if we go below 55 hours they're going to pull out our non fiction books. And anyone who wants to learn things knows the importance of non fiction books. And to have that change go from bringing in those 50 books to having books taken out by the state. That's going backwards and when you listen to all the work that's going in to that transportation museum. What a wonderful resource that's going to be that shouldn't happen at the expense of the Library. I agree with Mr. Voss saying that think about a way to look at this from a long term plan. How did this happen, but, then how can we make it better. Because the Library is important if you want to learn things, you don't have to pay to go to a Library to learn. You have to pay to go to a school you can just go and learn.

Chad Chase 397 Military Turnpike said I just want to second what Mr. Voss said that was really my thinking on this about the resource that the Library is for the city. And I understand what you said at the beginning about the Board and the Council have their different roles. But the Council is primarily in charge of the funding and the financial resources. I just want everyone to keep in mind the resources you have in those 4 people whose jobs are on the line right now. One of them Suzanne right here is just an excellent Library clerk. Every time you go in there she's helpful and dedicated to her job. Kelly, Librarian, that's involved and when I think of what it is to be a Librarian and what it means to the public, I think of her. It's about information and learning and I think that's something that the city should be committed to. Mallory is the youngest, is the part time position at stake here and she's I believe a Plattsburgh State student. So we have the perspective of a college student at the Library too that's another good resource. And Caleb, last but not least, is one of and I don't want to down play there is several at the Library that are very educated in technology. He's kind of a natural with it and that's the future for Libraries is embracing technology and serving the public that way and he's an invaluable resource in that respect. I think it's important when you're deciding what to do with the financial resources that it is affecting people resources. That's what the people are involved in this is resources to the city.

Matt Loach 141 Broad Street said I'm 43 years old and I've been using the Library my whole life. I actually practically grew up there when I was a child. That's one of the more important things about the Library that I don't think anyone else has mentioned tonight is its long standing history to this city. Since the city and the town together as just about the largest community of any size for miles and miles around, if a community of this size can't keep something as important as a Library going, we will be much poorer for that loss. Also, since this Library is the central part of the Clinton Essex system the other counties will also lose by our not keeping up with our responsibilities to our citizens. If you break a chain everyone loses. There's a book here in the Library written by another local resident, Dr. Frost, about the last 100 years of the history of Plattsburgh. Between it and the Library there is a wealth of information to be had on Plattsburgh and its residents and the community. Some of which we might never know again if there aren't resources like a public library to be had. So if the

Library can't be saved we will all lose by that.

Suzanne Barton 43 William Street said I am a taxpayer and an employee of the Plattsburgh Public Library. I just had a couple of questions. It states on your website under the tab of Plattsburgh Public Library that the Board of Trustees is appointed by the Mayor and the Common Council of the City of Plattsburgh. What I want to know is what kind of selection process do you go through to appoint the Board of Trustees who is in charge of over \$800,000 as you hand over that money to the Board and to the Director of Libraries. What kind of background do you require for the Board members to have when they come on board? Are any of them have any experience in accounting or law or human resources or contract negotiations or any of that? I think it's a valid question, especially when they are handling so much money. Are they aware that they are in charge of this money and it's up to them to do to the best of their responsibility to make sure everything balances? And if there is a problem 3 years ago and it got to be up to \$167,000 in arrears why is not the City Chamberlain or somebody else saying hey whoa you cant overdraw your accounts. That's my question.

7. OTHER ITEMS:

A. RESOLVED: In accordance with the request therefore the Common Council approves that the Mayor be authorized to sign a subordination agreement for property located at 29 Wildwood Estates owned by Lisa Maskell.

By Councilor Case; Seconded by Councilor Calnon

Discussion: None

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

ACTION TAKEN: Adopted

Follow up Action: None

B. RESOLVED: In accordance with the request therefore the Common Council approves Bill Treacy, Manager MLD to advertise for sealed bid for PMLD BID NO. 2011-12-1 "Wooden Utility Poles." Bid Opening Date: January 10, 2012 at 11:00 am.

By Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Case

Discussion: None

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)

ACTION TAKEN: Adopted

Follow up Action: None

C. THE MAYOR HANDS DOWN THE PERMANENT APPOINTMENT OF CORPORAL TO LEVI RITTER EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 9, 2011 PENDING THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A 12 WEEK PROBATIONARY PERIOD.

Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson

(All voted in the affirmative)
ACTION TAKEN: Adopted
Follow up Action: None

8. TRAVEL REQUEST: None

9. RESOLUTIONS FOR INITIAL CONSIDERATION:

1. Request from Bill Treacy, Manager MLD to write-off unpaid final bills from November 1, 2010 to November 30, 2010 in the total amount of \$1,767.04. The percentage of write-offs for this period is .15%.
2. Request from Mike Brodi, Department of Public Works Superintendent to award Whites Forest Products, Contract # 2011-24 "Select Cutting of Standing Timber" in the amount of \$34,000.

Councilor Calnon said Mike what's the expected time table on the work.

Mike Brodi DPW Superintendent said it start this winter some and maybe next year. I haven't talked to the forester we still have to draw the contracts up

3. Request from Environmental Manager Jonathan Ruff to attend the "New York Water Environment Association 2012 Annual Meeting" in New York City, NY from February 5 – 8, 2012 at an estimated cost not to exceed \$1,622.

10. NEW BUSINESS: None

11. CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

Motion to Adjourn by Councilor Jackson; Seconded by Councilor Tiffer
Roll call: Councilors Carpenter, Tiffer, Rabideau, Calnon, Case, Jackson
(All voted in the affirmative)
MEETING ADJOURNED: 5:58 pm